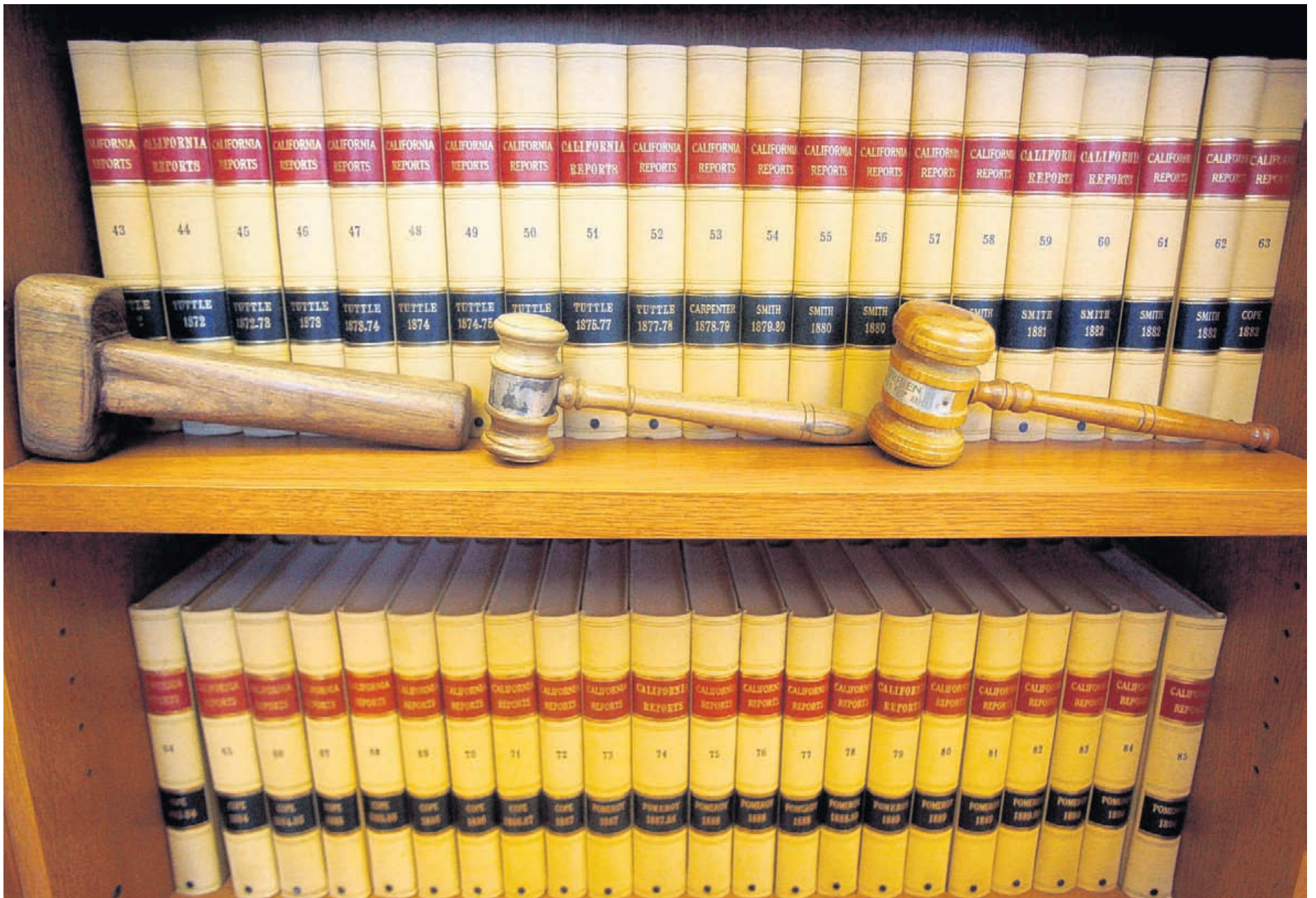




Senate confirms 200th federal judge under Biden as Democrats surpass Trump's pace



Gavels and law books are shown, July 14, 2010 in San Francisco, Calif.

Associated Press

By KEVIN FREKING and SEUNG MIN KIM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate on Wednesday confirmed the 200th federal judge of President Joe Biden's tenure, about a month earlier than when Donald Trump hit that mark in his term, though Trump still holds the edge when it comes to the most impactful confirmations — those to the Supreme Court and the country's 13 appellate courts. The march to 200 culminat-

ed with the confirmation of Angela Martinez as a district court judge in Arizona. The milestone reflects the importance that Biden, a former chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., placed on judicial confirmations after Trump put his enormous stamp on the federal judiciary with the confirmation of three Supreme Court justices. "Reaching 200 judges is a major milestone," Schumer said just before the 66-28

vote. "Simply put, our 200 judges comprise the most diverse slate of judicial nominations under any president in American history." The current pace of judicial confirmations for this White House came despite Biden, a Democrat, coming into office in 2021 with far fewer vacancies, particularly in the influential appellate courts, than Trump, a Republican, did in 2017. "There is more work to do," Biden said in a statement after the vote.

"Going forward, I will continue my solemn responsibility of nominating individuals who have excelled in their professional careers, who reflect the communities they serve and who apply the law impartially and without favoritism." It's unclear whether Biden can eclipse his predecessor's 234 judges before the year ends, though. Democrats have solidly backed the president's judicial nominees, but there have been some cracks in that resolve in recent

weeks. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said he would not support nominees who do not have some bipartisan support, and the two Democratic senators from Nevada are opposing a nominee who would become the nation's first Muslim appellate court judge. They did so after some law enforcement groups came out against the nomination.

Continued on Page 2

Senate confirms 200th federal judge under Biden as Democrats surpass Trump's pace

From Front

The White House is aware of the obstacles as they rush to surpass Trump's accomplishment. It's a high water mark that remains a point of pride for the former president and senior Republicans who made it happen, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. Filling dozens of judicial vacancies requires time on the Senate floor calendar, which becomes more scarce as senators in the narrowly divided chamber shift into election-year campaign mode.

Of the more than 40 current judicial vacancies nationwide, half are in states with two Republican senators. That matters because for district court judges, home-state senators still can exercise virtual veto power over a White House's nominations due to a long-standing Senate tradition.

White House officials say they have no illusions about the challenges they face but feel reaching 235 is possible. That doesn't please Republicans.

"Unfortunately, they learned from our example about prioritizing lifetime appointments," said Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas. Meanwhile, liberal advocacy groups are thrilled with the results so far. "I just cannot rave enough about these judges," said Jake Faleschini, who leads nominations work at the Alliance for Justice. "It's been nothing short of transformative of the federal judiciary in terms of both excellence, but also demographic and professional diversity."

At this stage in his term, Trump had two Supreme Court justices and 51 appellate court judges confirmed to lifetime appointments. Biden has tapped one Supreme Court justice and 42 appellate court judges. Biden has more confirmations of the district judges who handle civil and criminal cases. Those nominations tend to be less hard fought. Biden has emphasized adding more female and minority judges to the federal



President Joe Biden speaks about the PACT Act at the Westwood Park YMCA, Tuesday, May 21, 2024, in Nashua, N.H.

Associated Press

bench. On that front, 127 of the 200 judges confirmed to the bench are women. Fifty-eight are Black and 36 are Hispanic, according to Schumer's office. Thirty-five judges are Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, more than any other administration, according to the White House.

In the appellate courts, 30 of the 42 circuit judges confirmed during Biden's term are women, according to the White House. Thirteen Black women have been chosen as circuit judges, more than all previous administrations combined.

Under Biden, more Hispanic judges have been confirmed to the appellate courts than any other administration.

As abortion access remains a vital priority for the Biden administration and a key argument for the president's reelection bid, the White House also points to several judges with backgrounds on the issue. They include Judge Julie Rikelman of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, who before her nomination argued on behalf of the abortion clinic in *Dobbs vs. Jackson*, the 2022 ruling that dismantled *Roe vs. Wade*; and Nicole Berner, a former attorney at Planned Parenthood who now serves on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Conservatives say it is fine to have diversity, but that should not be the focus.

"I think the right standard isn't trying to check boxes with nominees, but to try to find the men and women who are going to be faith-

ful to the Constitution and the rule of law," said Carrie Severino, president of JCN, a conservative group that worked to boost support for Trump's nominees.

About a one-quarter of the judges Trump nominated were women and about 1 in 6 were minorities, according to the Pew Research Center. Asked about the diversity of Biden's nominees, GOP senators said there was too much focus on "identity politics."

"I'm interested in competent lawyers who will administer justice fairly. Now, there are women that can do that. There are men that can do that. There are people of color that can do that," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "But their primary characteristic that they're proudest of is racial identity or gender identity, and activist. And I just don't think that's what the American people want to see in their justice system."

Proponents of diversifying the federal judiciary counter that people who come before the court have more trust in the legal process when they see people who look like them. They said it's important to diversify the professional backgrounds of judges, too, so that more public defenders and those with a civil rights or non-profit background are considered. "The American people deserve federal judges who not only look like America, but understand the American experience from every angle," said Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman. □

Daily marijuana use outpaces daily drinking in the U.S., a new study says



Marijuana plants are displayed at a shop in San Francisco, Monday, March 20, 2023.

Associated Press

By **CARLA K. JOHNSON**
AP Medical Writer

Millions of people in the U.S. report using marijuana daily or nearly every day, according to an analysis of national survey data, and those people now outnumber those who say they are daily or nearly-daily drinkers of alcohol.

Alcohol is still more widely used, but 2022 was the first time this intensive level of marijuana use overtook daily and near-daily drinking, said the study's author, Jonathan Caulkins, a cannabis policy researcher at Carnegie Mellon University.

"A good 40% of current cannabis users are using it daily or near daily, a pattern that is more associated with tobacco use than typical alcohol use," Caulkins said. The research, based on data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, was published Wednesday in the journal *Addiction*. The survey is a highly regarded source of self-reported estimates of tobacco, alcohol and drug use in the United States.

In 2022, an estimated 17.7 million people reported using marijuana daily or near-daily compared to 14.7 million daily or near-daily drinkers, according to the study.

From 1992 to 2022, the per capita rate of reporting daily or near-daily marijuana use increased 15-fold. Caulkins acknowledged in the study that people may be more willing to report marijuana use as public acceptance grows, which could boost the increase. Most states now allow medical or recreational marijuana, though it remains illegal at the federal level. In November, Florida voters will decide on a constitutional amendment allowing recreational cannabis, and the federal government is moving to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug.

Research shows that high-frequency users are more likely to become addicted to marijuana, said Dr. David A. Gorelick, a psychiatry professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, who was not involved in the study.

The number of daily users suggests that more people are at risk for developing problematic cannabis use or addiction, Gorelick said.

"High frequency use also increases the risk of developing cannabis-associated psychosis," a severe condition where a person loses touch with reality, he said. □

Congress aims to overhaul presidential ethics rules with a plan led by an unlikely pair of lawmakers

By **FARNOUSH AMIRI**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Bipartisan legislation introduced in the House on Wednesday would require presidents and vice presidents to publicly disclose tax returns before, during and after their time in the White House as Congress makes an election-year push to curb foreign influence in American politics.

The proposal, led by the unusual pairing of Republican Rep. James Comer and progressive Democratic Rep. Katie Porter, is the latest effort to bolster congressional oversight of presidential ethics as both parties grapple with congressional investigations into their leading candidates for the White House.

Democrats on Tuesday introduced rival legislation that would enforce the Constitution's ban on emoluments, which prohibits a president from accepting foreign gifts and money without the permission of Congress. Proponents of that proposal say Republican Donald Trump brazen-



House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chair Rep. James Comer R-Ky., speaks, Jan. 10, 2024, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

ly ignored the clause while president as foreign government officials flocked to his various hotels and properties.

The release of the dueling bills suggests bipartisan appetite in Congress for revising presidential ethics rules. But those proposals are intertwined with fiercely par-

tisan fights about the conduct of Trump and Democratic President Joe Biden, and it remains to be seen whether any bill can make it through the House, let alone become law.

The White House said in a statement Wednesday that Biden has already complied with many of the pro-

visions laid out in the legislation and "made clear his commitment to upholding strong ethical standards."

The proposal from Comer, R-Ky., and Porter, D-Calif., is focused on greater transparency and requires the disclosure of foreign payments, gifts and loans made to officials' immedi-

ate family members. Presidents and vice presidents would be required to disclose when immediate family members accompany them on official travel and specify when they do so for official business purposes. The provisions are a direct response to concerns surrounding the business dealings of Trump's children and Biden's son.

The approaches by Trump and Biden to financial disclosures have been starkly different. Trump has persistently rejected efforts to share details about his financial history, counter to the practice of transparency followed by all his predecessors in the post-Watergate era. Biden has routinely released his annual returns.

Comer, chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, said the legislation would ensure "that moving forward, American presidents, vice presidents, and their family members cannot profit from their proximity to power." □

Associated Press

Republican National Committee's headquarters evacuated after vials of blood are addressed to Trump

By **LISA MASCARO, MEG KINNARD and MICHELLE L. PRICE**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Republican National Committee's Washington headquarters was briefly evacuated on Wednesday as police investigated two vials of blood that had been addressed to former President Donald Trump following the presumptive presidential nominee's takeover of the national party apparatus. Hazardous-materials teams were called in after the vials were discovered, according to the U.S. Capitol Police, who said they would continue to investigate. It was unclear if anyone came into contact with the blood and to whom it belonged. The vials were ad-

ressed to Trump, according to a person familiar with the situation but not authorized to speak about it publicly. It was unclear whether any message accompanied the vials explaining why they were sent.

The RNC chairman, Michael Whatley, decried the "revolting attack" but did not offer more details.

"We are thankful to law enforcement, who responded quickly and ensured everyone's safety. The lockdown has been cleared and staff has resumed their office duties because we remain unintimidated and undeterred in our efforts to elect President Trump to the White House," Whatley said in a statement.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

condemned "any form of threats," adding, "That has no place in our politics, no place anywhere."

The U.S. Secret Service did not immediately return messages seeking comment. The Metropolitan Police Department and the local fire department referred comment to the Capitol Police. Earlier Wednesday, the Capitol Police issued a statement advising people to avoid the block where the RNC is located, a short walk southeast of the Capitol. The House sergeant at arms, the U.S. House of Representatives' chief law enforcement and protocol officer, sent out information advising traffic restrictions in the area "due to law enforcement activity at the RNC." Trump's hand-

picked leadership including his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, as the party's national vice chair and former North Carolina GOP Chairman Michael Whatley

as RNC chairman recently took over the RNC, completing his takeover of the national party as he closes in on a third straight GOP presidential nomination. □



The Republican National Committee logo is shown on the stage at the North Charleston Coliseum, Jan. 13, 2016, in North Charleston, S.C.

Associated Press

Average U.S. vehicle age hits record 12.6 years as high prices force people to keep them longer

By **TOM KRISHER**

AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Cars, trucks and SUVs in the U.S. keep getting older, hitting a record average age of 12.6 years in 2024 as people hang on to their vehicles largely because new ones cost so much.

S&P Global Mobility, which tracks state vehicle registration data nationwide, said Wednesday that the average vehicle age grew about two months from last year's record.

But the growth in average age is starting to slow as new vehicle sales start to recover from pandemic-related shortages of parts, including computer chips. The average increased by three months in 2023.

Still, with an average U.S. new-vehicle selling price of just over \$45,000 last month, many can't afford to buy new even though prices are down more than \$2,000 from the peak in December of 2022, according to J.D. Power.

"It's prohibitively high for a lot of households now," said



Commuters wait to drive through the Holland Tunnel into New York City during morning rush hour traffic in Jersey City, N.J., Wednesday, March 8, 2023.

Associated Press

Todd Campau, aftermarket leader for S&P Global Mobility.

"So I think consumers are being painted into the corner of having to keep the vehicle on the road longer." Other factors include people

waiting to see if they want to buy an electric vehicle or go with a gas-electric hybrid or a gasoline vehicle. Many, he said, are worried about the charging network being built up so they can travel without

worrying about running out of battery power. Also, he said, vehicles are made better these days and simply are lasting a long time. New vehicle sales in the U.S. are starting to return to pre-pandemic levels, with

prices and interest rates the big influencing factors rather than illness and supply-chain problems, Campau said.

He said he expects sales to hit around 16 million this year, up from 15.6 million last year and 13.9 million in 2022. As more new vehicles are sold and replace aging vehicles in the nation's fleet of 286 million passenger vehicles, the average age should stop growing and stabilize, Campau said. And unlike immediately after the pandemic, more lower-cost vehicles are being sold, which likely will bring down the average price, he said. People keeping vehicles longer is good news for the local auto repair shop. About 70% of vehicles on the road are 6 or more years old, he said, beyond manufacturer warranties.

Those who are able to keep their rides for multiple years usually get the oil changed regularly and follow manufacturer maintenance schedules, Campau noted. □

Michigan farmworker diagnosed with bird flu, becoming 2nd U.S. case tied to dairy cows

By **MIKE STOBBE and JONEL ALECCIA**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A Michigan dairy worker has been diagnosed with bird flu the second human case associated with an outbreak in U.S. dairy cows.

The patient had mild eye symptoms and has recovered, U.S. and Michigan health officials said in announcing the case Wednesday. The worker had been in contact with cows presumed to be infected, and the risk to the public remains low, officials said.

A nasal swab from the person tested negative for the virus, but an eye swab tested positive, "indicating an eye infection," the U.S. Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention said in a statement.

The first case happened in late March, when a farmworker in Texas was diagnosed in what officials called the first known in-

stance globally of a person catching this version of bird flu from a mammal. That patient also reported only eye inflammation and recovered.

Since 2020, a bird flu virus

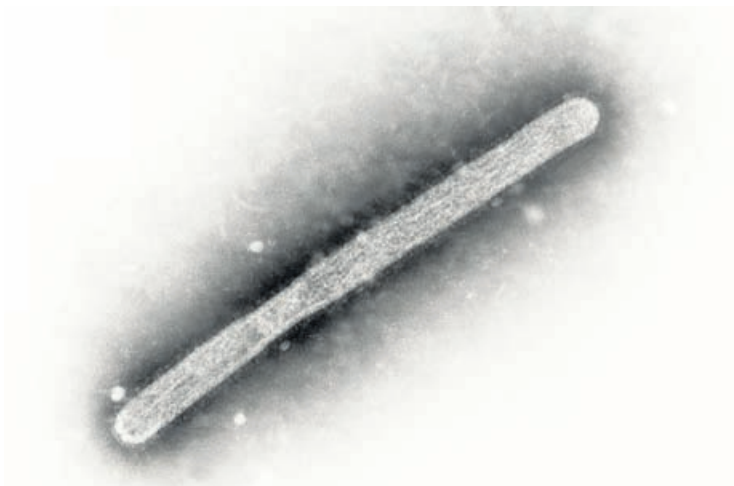
has been spreading among more animal species including dogs, cats, skunks, bears and even seals and porpoises in scores of countries. The detection in U.S. livestock earlier this year was an unexpected twist that sparked questions about food safety and whether it would start spreading among humans. That hasn't happened, although there's been a steady increase of reported infections in cows. As of Wednesday, the virus had been confirmed in 51 dairy herds in nine states, according to the U.S. Agriculture Department.

Fifteen of the herds were in Michigan. Health officials there have declined to say how many people exposed to infected cattle

have been tested or monitored.

The virus has been found in high levels in the raw milk of infected cows, but government officials say pasteurized products sold in grocery stores are safe because heat treatment has been confirmed to kill the virus.

The new case marks the third time a person in the United States has been diagnosed with what's known as Type A H5N1 virus. In 2022, a prison inmate in a work program picked it up while killing infected birds at a poultry farm in Montrose County, Colorado. His only symptom was fatigue, and he recovered. That predated the virus's appearance in cows. □



This 2005 electron microscope image shows an avian influenza A H5N1 virion.

Associated Press

Norway, Ireland and Spain say they will recognize a Palestinian state, deepening Israel's isolation

By JOSEPH WILSON, MELANIE LIDMAN and JOSEPH KRAUSS
Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Norway, Ireland and Spain said Wednesday they would recognize a Palestinian state, a historic but largely symbolic move that further deepens Israel's isolation more than seven months into its grinding war against Hamas in Gaza. Israel immediately denounced the decisions and recalled its ambassadors to the three countries.

Palestinian officials welcomed the announcements as an affirmation of their decades-long quest for statehood in east Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip territories Israel seized in the 1967 Mid-east war and still controls.

While some 140 countries more than two-thirds of the United Nations recognize a Palestinian state, Wednesday's cascade of announcements could build momentum at a time when even close allies of Israel have piled on criticism for its conduct in Gaza.

The timing of the move was a surprise, but discussions have been underway for weeks in some European Union countries about possibly recognizing a Palestinian state. Proponents have argued that the war has shown the need for a new push toward a two-state solution, 15 years after negotiations collapsed between Israel and the Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government opposes Palestinian statehood.

It was the second blow to Israel's international reputation this week after the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said he would seek arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his defense minister. The International Court of Justice is also considering allegations of genocide that Israel has strenuously denied.

In addition to recalling the ambassadors to the three



The three Irish Government leaders from left, Minister Eamon Ryan, Taoiseach Simon Harris and Tanaiste Micheal Martin speak to the media during a press conference outside the Government Buildings, in Dublin, Ireland, Wednesday May 22, 2024.

countries, Israel summoned their envoys, accusing the Europeans of rewarding the militant Hamas group for its Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war. Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the European ambassadors would watch grisly video footage of the attack.

In that assault, Hamas-led militants stormed across the border, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostage. The ICC prosecutor is also seeking arrest warrants for three Hamas leaders. Israel's ensuing offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and has caused a humanitarian crisis and a near-famine. The ICC prosecutor has accused Israeli leaders of using starvation as a weapon. "History will remember that Spain, Norway, and Ireland decided to award a gold medal to Hamas murderers and rapists," Katz said.

In response to the announcements in Europe, Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir paid a provocative visit Wednesday to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound a flashpoint in Jerusalem that is sacred to Muslims and Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount. The

move could escalate tensions across the region.

"We will not even allow a statement about a Palestinian state," he said.

In further retaliation, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said he would stop transferring tax revenue earmarked for the Palestinian Authority, a move that threatens to handicap its already waning ability to pay salaries to thousands of employees.

Under interim peace accords in the 1990s, Israel collects tax revenue on behalf of the Palestinians, and it has used the money as a tool to pressure the PA. After the Oct. 7 Hamas attack, Smotrich froze the transfers, but Israel agreed to send the money to Norway, which transferred it to the PA. Smotrich said Wednesday that he was ending that arrangement.

The international community has long viewed the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel as the only realistic way to resolve the conflict. The United States and Britain, among others, have backed the idea of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel but say it should come as part of a negotiated settlement. Netanyahu's government

says the conflict can only be resolved through direct negotiations.

The formal recognition by Norway, Spain and Ireland which all have a record of friendly ties with both the Israelis and the Palestinians, while long advocating for a Palestinian state is planned for May 28.

Their announcements came in swift succession. Norway, which helped broker the Oslo accords that kicked off the peace process in the 1990s, was the first. "There cannot be peace in the Middle East if there is no recognition," said Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

The country plans to upgrade its representative office in the West Bank to an embassy.

Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris called it a "historic and important day for Ireland and for Palestine," saying the announcements had been coordinated and other countries might join. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who announced his country's decision before parliament, has spent months touring European and Middle Eastern countries to garner support for recognition and a cease-fire in Gaza.

"This recognition is not against anyone, it is not against the Israeli people," Sánchez said. "It is an act in favor of peace, justice and moral consistency."

President Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, welcomed the decisions and called on other nations to "recognize our legitimate rights and support the struggle of our people for liberation and independence."

Hamas, which Western countries and Israel view as a terrorist group, does not recognize Israel's existence but has indicated it might agree to a state on the 1967 lines, at least on an interim basis. Israel says any Palestinian state would be at risk of being taken over by Hamas, posing a threat to its security.

The announcements are unlikely to have any impact on the war in Gaza or the long-running conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem and considers it part of its capital, and in the occupied West Bank it has built scores of Jewish settlements that are now home to over 500,000 Israelis. The settlers have Israeli citizenship, while the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule.

Netanyahu has said Israel will maintain security control of Gaza even after any defeat of Hamas, and the war is still raging there. An Israeli airstrike early Wednesday killed 10 people, including four women and four children, who had been displaced and were sheltering in central Gaza, according to hospital authorities.

Hugh Lovatt, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said "recognition is a tangible step towards a viable political track leading to Palestinian self-determination." □

From Zambia to Afghanistan, WFP warns El Niño's extreme weather is causing a surge in hunger

By **GERALD IMRAY**
Associated Press
CAPE TOWN, South Africa

(AP) — Extreme weather attributed to the El Niño phenomenon is causing a surge in hunger in several countries, including Zambia and Afghanistan, the UN's World Food Programme said Wednesday, and called on donors for much-needed help.

El Niño is a natural, temporary and occasional warming of part of the Pacific that shifts global weather patterns, and studies say that as the world warms, they may get stronger.

Tens of millions of people in southern Africa rely on the weather to grow food to feed themselves.

In a statement, the WFP warned that southern Africa was the "epicenter of the crisis" after a cycle of floods and drought has battered the region over the last three years. Three countries, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia, are the worst affected and have seen between 40-80% of their staple corn crops wiped out by drought this season, leaving millions impacted, according to the UN food agency.

The WFP said executive director Cindy McCain had traveled to Zambia and seen how "severe drought has wiped out harvests in a region where 70% of the population relies on agriculture to survive."

"We can't ask millions to wait for the next harvest season a year from now to put food on their tables," McCain said in a statement. "These families need our support today while we help to build a more resilient future."

WFP said its "teams have started to respond but US\$409 million are needed for six months to assist 4.8 million people in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe."

Other countries, including Congo and Afghanistan, are facing similar problems due to changing weather conditions which have led to destroyed crops, livestock deaths and displaced people, causing a surge in hunger, the agency said in a separate statement.

This comes as hunger crises caused by conflict in Gaza and Sudan are already stretching the agency's aid capacity.

The WFP's call for aid came

days after the regional Southern African Development Community made a plea for help after a special virtual meeting of leaders and government officials to discuss the impact of the extreme weather.

In a joint statement, the southern African countries said the region needed \$5.5 billion to help more than 61 million people.

There had been a "multi-faceted and cascading impact of the El Niño-induced drought and floods across multiple sectors," the regional bloc said, noting how it had caused other problems, such as contributing to large and deadly outbreaks of the water-borne cholera disease. Countries that depend on hydroelectric generators, like Zambia, are struggling to produce enough electricity because of the drought. Alongside El Niño, the southern African region has recently seen a series of tropical cyclones that scientists said were likely made stronger and wetter by human-caused climate change and the increase in global temperatures.

While the African continent contributes the least to cli-



A man swims from a submerged church compound, after the River Tana broke its banks following heavy rains at Mororo, border of Tana River and Garissa counties, North Eastern Kenya, Sunday, April. 28, 2024.

Associated Press

mate change, it is expected to suffer the most. Poorer countries are generally not as well-equipped to deal with the impact.

Even before the floods and drought, food insecurity and malnutrition were already at alarming levels in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia and humanitarian assistance had stalled because of funding shortages for aid, WFP said.

The three countries have all declared national disasters over this year's drought,

and others have provided equally grim assessments.

The United Nations humanitarian agency said this month that around half of Zimbabwe's population of 15 million needed "lifesaving and life-sustaining" help because of the drought.

Last week, the Action Against Hunger non-profit warned that "a hunger crisis may be imminent" in Kenya in East Africa after catastrophic floods displaced more than 250,000 people. □

Dutch coalition government dominated by an anti-Islam party struggles to find prime minister

By **RAF CASERT and MIKE CORDER**
Associated Press
THE HAGUE (AP) — The parties

that agreed to form a Dutch coalition dominated by the far right are struggling to find a prime minister and warned



Geert Wilders, leader of the far-right party PVV, or Party for Freedom, talks to the media, two days after winning the most votes in a general election, in The Hague, Netherlands, on Nov. 24, 2023.

Associated Press

Wednesday that the search might leave the Netherlands without a fully functional government for months.

Anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders, who convincingly won the November election, told legislators it might take until after the summer to cobble together a technocrat government. He reiterated that he would not become prime minister as part of the outline coalition deal.

The initial candidate for prime minister that Wilders had in mind withdrew early this week following reported allegations of his involvement in medical patent fraud. Wilders has been a divisive figure in Dutch politics for the past two decades and his appointment as prime minister would be

seen as a step too far. "No one had predicted this would work," Wilders said about the coalition. "And I assure you that the government team, including the prime minister, will be presented. We will naturally make that work too." Wilders was instrumental in building a coalition with outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte's center-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, the populist Farmer Citizen Movement and the new centrist New Social Contract party.

With plans to enforce the most restrictive asylum policy in the history of the Netherlands, Wilders has pushed a Dutch coalition far to the right and obscured the traditional view of the country as an open,

tolerant society.

The coalition plan has also raised questions about the next government's climate commitments that are enshrined in European Union policies. The Farmer Citizen Movement has made sure the deal includes soothing language and concessions to farmers who have choked roads with tractors during disruptive protests.

Asylum and climate could quickly set up bruising battles with EU headquarters in Brussels, which oversees how policies are implemented in member states, and dent the nation's stature as a pillar of the 27-nation bloc, which Rutte had carefully nurtured during his nearly 13 years in power. □

Aruba Celebrates the Grand Opening of the Renovated Maria Convent Building, a Hub for STEM Education

(Oranjestad)—The Government of Aruba (GoA), the University of Aruba (UA), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are proud to announce the grand opening of the rehabilitated Maria Convent building on Monday, May 20th, 2024. This historic occasion marks the culmination of a collaborative effort to create a vibrant center for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education in Aruba.

The Maria Convent—now considered a monument—was constructed in 1920 as a convent for the Dominican Sisters of Voorschoten who had moved from the Netherlands to Aruba. In 1946, the first stone for the chapel of the convent was laid, and in the 1950s, there were approximately 23 sisters living in the convent. The convent closed in the 1980s and was transferred to the Government of Aruba.

The building was abandoned for many years and has now been completely restored to its original glory in a very beautiful way. The €7.3 million project, funded by the European Union, transformed the 2,000-square-meter Maria Convent building into a state-of-the-art educational facility. The renovated building now features four dedicated classrooms, two server rooms, a well-equipped library, a stunning aula (auditorium), five dedicated study rooms, office space for 30 staff members, and a computer lab outfitted with ICT equipment for 40 students. H.E. Mrs. Evelyn Wever-Croes, Prime Minister of Aruba, expressed her gratitude for the completion of the project and what it means for Aruba; "I am ever grateful for the possibility of enhancing our education level. Aruba, as a Small Island State embraces the collaboration between the European Union, the Uni-



versity of Aruba KU Leuven, and the UNDP and the introduction of the SISSTEM faculty at the University of Aruba." H.E. Rene Van Nes, EU Ambassador stated, "The beautiful renovation of the Maria Convent makes me proud in many ways. It is wonderful to see this cultural heritage site returned to its old glory. It is great that old Aruban architecture meets modern Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, paving the way for a future anchored in the past. I am in particular happy that the EU has contributed to giving young Arubans now the opportunity to receive a highly relevant quality education at home, here on the beautiful island of Aruba."

Mr. Ugo Blanco, UNDP Resident Representative, offered his perspective on the project's impact, stating, "This state-of-the-art STEM facility will empower future generations to tackle the pressing challenges of our time, from renewable energy to climate change adaptation. The success of this project highlights the power of collaboration and the shared commitment of the Government of Aruba, the University of Aruba, the European Union, and the UNDP to foster innovation and environmental responsibility. We are proud to support initiatives that not only preserve cultural heritage but also pave the way for a brighter, more sustainable future."

The Maria Convent renovation prioritized sustainability by incorporating features that minimize environmental impact. This includes a smart climate control system that optimizes energy efficiency, enhanced roof insulation to reduce energy consumption, smart lighting

systems for further energy savings, and a water reuse system for irrigation that promotes water conservation. The building serves as the new home for the UA's SISSTEM program, dedicated to fostering a strong foundation in STEM fields. This investment in STEM education is crucial for Aruba's continued development as SISSTEM graduates will be equipped to tackle critical challenges such as sustainability, renewable energy, and climate change adaptation. This, in turn, strengthens Aruba's position as a leader in innovation and environmental responsibility within the Caribbean region.

The success of the Maria Convent rehabilitation project is a testament to the collaborative efforts of the GoA, particularly the Ministry and Department of Economic Affairs, the University of Aruba, the Monuments Bureau, the EU as the project donor, and the UNDP team on the ground. This collaborative spirit exemplifies the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable development goals, and the opening ceremony underscores the value of continued support and investment in projects that contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, sustainable development, and social inclusion in Aruba and the wider region. The Maria Convent building stands as an example of progress, poised to nurture generations of future Aruban leaders in STEM fields. □





Papillon: Where Culinary Tradition Sparks with Timeless Elegance



Tucked away in the vibrant heart of the Village for over a decade and a half, Papillon isn't just a restaurant; it's a culinary adventure waiting to unfold. Picture this: a sanctuary where the flavors of the French Caribbean dance harmoniously with classic French fare, all set against the backdrop of a movie-inspired ambiance that's as enchanting as it is welcoming.

Step through the doors of Papillon, and you're not just stepping into a dining establishment; you're stepping into a world where sophistication embraces you like an old friend. The decor, a homage to the allure of the iconic film, casts a spell of intimacy and comfort, urging you to settle in and relish every moment. Here, dining isn't just about sustenance; it's about indulging in an experience meticulously crafted to ignite your senses.

At the heart of Papillon's magic lies its menu – a symphony of flavors orchestrated by culinary artisans. Imagine savoring the decadent richness of foie gras or the sublime delicacy of frog legs, each dish a love letter to tradition infused with a dash of innovation. And oh, the spectacle of the Dover sole being expertly prepared tableside! It's culinary theater at its finest, leaving you spellbound with every bite.

But wait, there's more! Enter the realm of the Chef's Table, a weekly extravaganza led by the maestro himself, Executive Chef Juan Ludeña.

Prepare to be whisked away on a six-course odyssey, each dish meticulously paired with wines hand-picked by the esteemed Maitre d' Michael Otten. It's a soirée reserved for those who truly appreciate the artistry of gastronomy – an exquisite symphony for the palate.

And if that wasn't enough to tantalize your taste buds, behold the newest addition to the Papillon family: L'Avenue – a Belgian bistro nestled in the sun-kissed paradise of Palm Beach Aruba. Here, amidst the swaying palms and azure waters, Belgian cuisine takes center stage. From plump mussels to heavenly Brussels waffles, every bite is a journey through



the flavors of Belgium, set against a backdrop of laid-back luxury.



In essence, Papillon isn't just a restaurant; it's an oasis for epicurean explorers. It's where passion meets refinement, where every dish is a masterpiece waiting to be savored, and every moment is a celebration of the finer things in life. So whether you're craving the warmth of French Caribbean delights or eager to embark on a culinary voyage through Belgium, Papillon and L'Avenue invite you to join them on an unforgettable journey for the senses. Bon appétit! □

Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort Aruba!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)



Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors

Mr. Jason & Angela Lawrence from Taunton Massachusetts, United States.

Mr. Guido & Mrs. Gail Coppola from Waltham Massachusetts, United States.

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort Aruba bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their fa-

vorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba's people.
- Aruba's beach.
- Aruba's weather.
- Aruba's restaurants.
- "It's super easy to travel to Aruba"
- Aruba's a short flight away.
- Aruba's out of the hurricane belt.

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □

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The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

(Oranjestad)—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamentu: "kibra" (break) "hacha" (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its neighboring trees to starts blooming first.

The legend of the Kibrahacha
Written by Hubert (Lio Booi)

One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudawechea, who was a epistemophile, to come see his father.

Aterima wasted to time and went to go fetch Kudawechea. Upon telling Kudawechea that her father was sick, he immediately accompanied Aterima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aterima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudawechea was determined to bring back Aterima's father back to health, and so off they

went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the tree, they saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudawechea, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora and fauna, told Aterima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aterima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start.

To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aterima continued plucking with enthusiasm and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers. Kudawechea, satisfied to see Aterima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut.

Upon arriving back at the hut,



Aterima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously, after just one sip of the tea, the father's fever left his body immediately, and he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aterima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns. □

Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

Baby Beach in San Nicolas
Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play

in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the man-

grove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and

high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok
Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great

place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □

The Aruban Cunukero

From past to present



(Oranjestad)—Aruba's culture consists of rich historical traditions that make up the Aruban identity and lifestyle. However, the life of the cunukero (farmer) is perhaps the most important aspect of our culture, in a sense representing to locals the true essence of the Aruban.

Historically, cunucus (farms) played a huge role in the early social and economic development of Aruba, and its relevance dates back to the early days of the colonization era. Upon being discovered by Spanish conquistadors in the late 15th century, Aruba was used primarily as a ranch, housing horses and cattle brought from Europe. During the Dutch colonization era where the West Indian Company (WIC) dominated the economic sphere on the island, using the land to set up cattle farms and ranches remained popular.

Anthropologist Sidney Mintz divided Caribbean farmers back in four categories:

1. The "squatters", who were mostly comprised

of illegal and poor colonists, runaway slaves and deserters who took advantage of the Spanish's weak supervision on Caribbean islands like Cuba and the DR;

2. Then you have "Early Yeomen", who were legal farmers who came to the west under contract. Once their contract expired, they were given a plot of land for independent use;
3. Proto-Peasants were plantation slaves who were allowed to have a small piece of land to grow food for their own consumption. This was to curb the cost of living on the plantations;
4. Lastly you have the "Runaway Peasant-ries", usually comprised of runaway slaves who acquired farming tools and cattle through secret exchanges with other slaves from different plantations.

However, the Aruban cunukeros back then are hard to place, and their his-

tory may explain why.

From 1636 (beginning of Dutch colonization era) to before the oil industry in 1924, Aruba's population consisted of mostly farmers. These farmers were mostly indigenous and were characterized as peasants. They weren't allowed to participate in trading, but instead were granted a piece of land to live off of. However, in exchange for this grant, these indigenous farmers were obligated to work for the WIC, doing daily tasks such as taking care of or hunting cattle—large majority of which were destined for Curacao, clean water tanks and chop wood, among other things.

As much as these farmers were given to opportunity to live "free" with a plot of land, their exclusion from the trading and business world, as well as being deprived the chance to become real property and cattle owners, made them a unique group among Caribbean farmers at the time.

The WIC placed a lot of restrictions on these indigenous farmers—a method to safeguard their cattle deposit on the island. The indigenous farmers were mostly granted less than 7 acres of land. Those who owned bigger land were either once affiliated with the WIC or were colonists who settled on the island to try their luck at farming. In 1767, there were about 120 houses/cunucus on the island.

These Aruban farmers were also limited to the amount of cattle they could keep. Most kept goats as cattle, as only those who were affiliated with the WIC could keep (more) sheep. Of the 76 goat herders on the island, about 45 of them had less than 30 goats, and only 7 of them had more than 60 goats.

It wasn't until the WIC was defunct in late 18th century that these farmers were able to obtain more freedom as cunukeros. After 1824, the government gave these farmers official permission to keep live-

stock, and the obligations once placed on them were officially discarded.

Because of the dry climate in Aruba, growing food for commercial purposes was not popular. The focus was mainly on cattle herding and taking care of livestock. However, livestock need food to survive, and when Aruba experienced its duper dry climate, many farmers would see a big loss in their livestock, and hence profit.

Although the WIC at one point did try to come up with an initiative to get more people to have land on the island, the climate never really allowed real profit from farming. Because of the climate, Aruban farmers in general could not keep large quantities of livestock. At a certain point toward the end of the 18th century, the climate got so bad that many farmers decided to leave the island for a while.

For this reason, the farming economy on the island remained small. As the years went by and people noticed that these farms could not really produce any sustainable profit, farmers kept their small piece of land just to live off of. This is why the Aruban cunukeros only played a very tiny role into the plantation economy.

In modern Aruba, cunucus and cunukeros still exist on the island, fortunately with more freedom and more opportunity to tap into the agricultural market. These farmers usually sell their produce on a smaller scale, like during farmers' market events and other types of (holiday) events.

Source: "Arubaans Akkoord: Opstellen over Aruba van voor de komst van de olieindustrie (Aruban Accord: Essays on Aruba Before the Arrival of the Oil Industry)" by Alofs, Luc; Rutgers, Wim; Coomans, Henry E. red. □

Did you know about... Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 2)

(Oranjestad)—In Yesterday's issue, we've provided some basic rules when driving on the four-lane highways and roundabouts on the island. Today, we want to offer you more tips and tricks when it comes to driving on the roads and highways of Aruba.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired

by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also

encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □



bebouwde kom



end bebouwde kom



end priority



end speed limit



intersection priority



priority



speed limit



stop sign



triangle stop sign

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45 Sports figure

1 Bakery buy

5 Hire

11 Soprano instrument

12 Good hit

13 Nuisance

14 Tailored sleeve detail

15 Canines

17 Doctor's charge

18 Peeved states

22 Flint product

24 Veep Agnew

25 Honolulu souvenir

26 — de plume

27 Extreme

30 Pigeon's perch

32 One of the Barrymores

33 Clumsy one

34 Lazy person

38 Duplicates

41 Honolulu do

42 Grove growth

43 Avenue liners

44 Prepares for a blow

DOWN

1 Tug-of-war need

2 Follow the rules

3 Give up

4 Pi, phi, or psi

5 Keenness

6 River parts

7 Workout exercise

8 Wt. units

9 Flamenco cry

10 To date

16 Mouse-spotting cry

19 Nitpick

VOTE SALAAM
ABUT UGANDA
SORE MENTOR
TEN FUNK
ERUPT BRA
CEDAR SQUAB
ATOZ URGE
TRUER JANET
SET EXUDE
FLAG DEB
THORAX YOYO
HAWAII EURO
EMENDS STEM

Yesterday's answer

20 Lily pad

21 One or more

22 Turn

23 Hide

28 Pine products

29 State without proof

30 Piece of lumber

31 Philadelphia team

35 Calls on

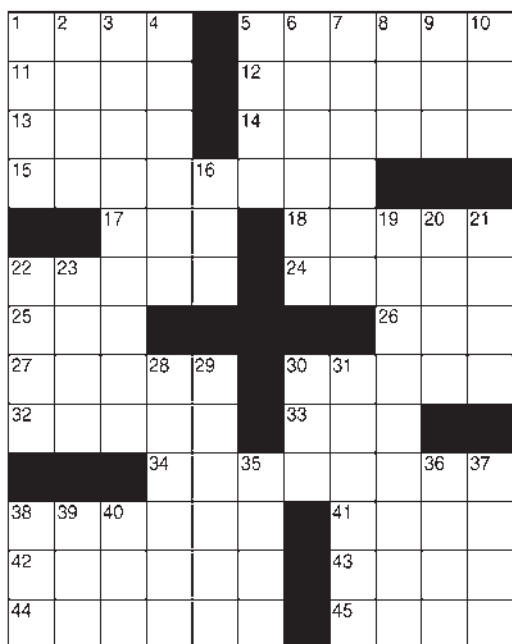
36 Hindu hero

37 Do some house-work

38 Barracks bed

39 Bauxite, for one

40 Piper of myth



5-23

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-23

CRYPTOQUOTE

OG XYT FJOYJOEOMD XYTJWDBG,

XYT UJD ZYOSZ EY WUAD

XYTJWDBG. — ZUVJODBB

TSOYS

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: USE WHAT TALENTS YOU POSSESS; THE WOODS WOULD BE VERY SILENT IF NO BIRDS SANG THERE EXCEPT THOSE THAT SANG BEST. — HENRY VAN DYKE

Cruise ship Schedule: May 01 - May 28 2024

TUE	07	CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	14	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
WED	15	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	21	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	C	1
WED	22	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
MON	27	ISLAND PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	28	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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24/7

Sun's magnetic field may form close to the surface. This finding could improve solar storm forecasts

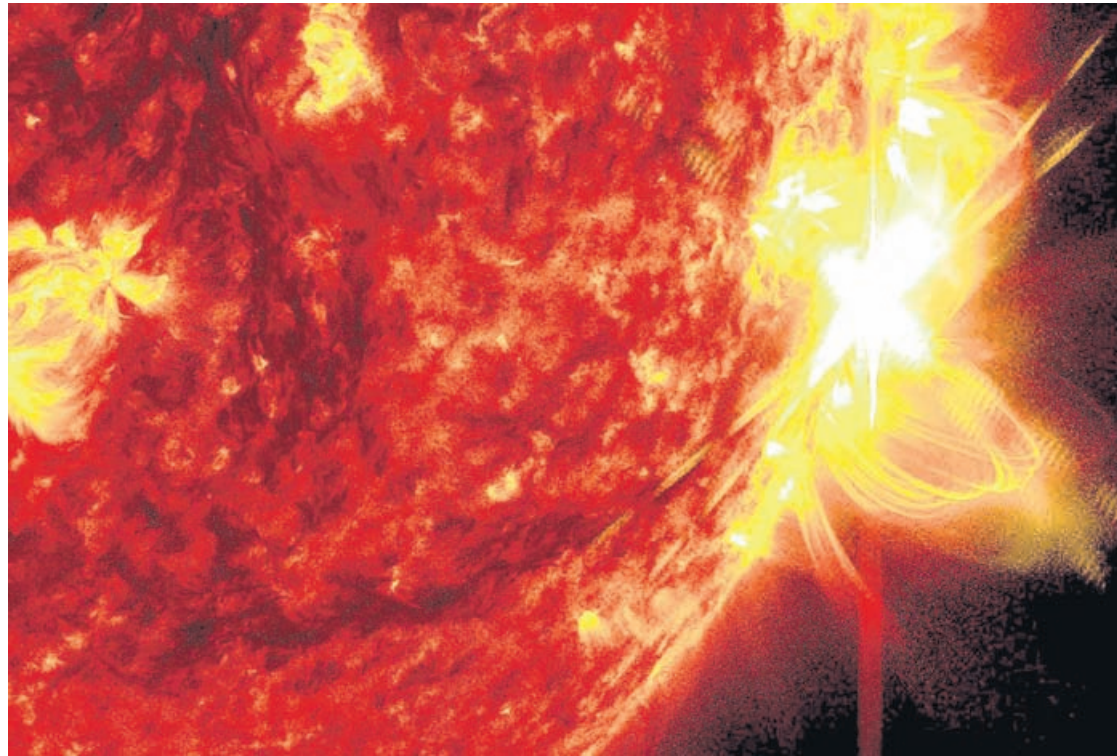
By **MARCIA DUNN**
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.
(AP) — New research indicates the sun's magnetic field originates much closer to the surface than previously thought, a finding that could help predict periods of extreme solar storms like the ones that slammed Earth earlier this month.

The magnetic field appears to generate 20,000 miles (32,000 kilometers) beneath the sun's surface. Previous calculations put the roots of this process more than 130,000 miles (209,000 kilometers) below, an international team reported Wednesday.

The sun's intense magnetic energy is the source of solar flares and eruptions of plasma known as coronal mass ejections. When directed toward Earth, they can create stunning auroras but also disrupt power and communications. "We still don't understand the sun well enough to make accurate predictions" of space weather, lead author Geoffrey Vasil of the University of Edinburgh said in an email. The latest findings published in the journal Nature "will be an important step toward finally resolving" this mysterious process known as solar dynamo, added co-author Daniel Lecoanet of Northwestern University.

Galileo was among the first astronomers to turn a telescope skyward and study sunspots, back in the early 1600s. Solar flares and coronal mass ejections tend to occur near sunspots, dark patches as big as Earth that are located near the most intense portions of the sun's shifting magnetic field.

Vasil and his team developed new models of the interaction between the sun's magnetic field and the flow of plasma, which varies at different latitudes during an 11-year cycle. They fed their calculations into a NASA supercom-



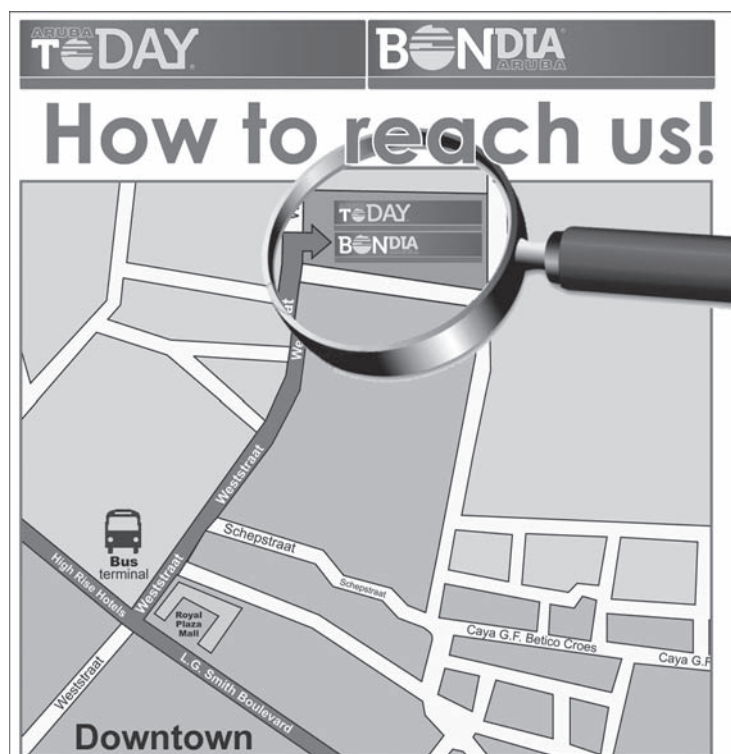
This image provided by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory shows a solar flare, right, on May 14, 2024, captured in the extreme ultraviolet light portion of the spectrum.

Associated Press

puter in Northern California the same one used in the 2015 movie "The Martian" to verify the best flight path to rescue the main character. The results suggested a shallow magnetic field and additional research is needed to confirm this. The modeling was "highly simplified," University of Wisconsin-Madison's Ellen Zweibel, who was not part of the team, said in an accompanying editorial. The results are intriguing and "sure to inspire future studies," Zweibel said. The new knowledge should improve long-term

solar forecasts, allowing scientists to better predict the strength of our star's future cycles. The sun is approaching its peak level of activity in the current 11-year cycle, thus the recent flareups. Strong solar flares and outbursts of billions of tons of plasma earlier this month unleashed severe solar storms that produced auroras in unexpected places. Last week, the sun spewed out the biggest solar flare in almost 20 years, but it steered clear of Earth. Better understanding of the sun can ensure "we

are prepared for when the next storm potentially much more dangerous hits Earth," Lecoanet said.



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Glen Powell gives big leading man energy in 'Hit Man'

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

For a guy like Glen Powell, the ascent to movie stardom isn't really a question. It's more like an inevitability.

Blessed with that square jawline, those bright green eyes, a flop of dirty blonde hair and the kind of symmetrical smile that would seem suspect if it weren't so darn charming, he's a Disney prince before they all became the bad guys. And he's got the kind of effortless, high-wattage charisma that ensures a career beyond soaps and procedurals, the typical resting ground for the laughably handsome. Powell has something, you believe, going on behind the eyes. This is all to say that suspension of disbelief is a prerequisite going into "Hit Man," a decently entertaining action-comedy-romance about a fake hit man from filmmaker Richard Linklater, who co-wrote the script with Powell. It's making a brief stop in theaters starting Friday before hitting Netflix on June 7. Based on a "somewhat true story" though it may be, this is a film that asks its audi-



This image released by Netflix shows Adria Arjona, left, and Glen Powell in a scene from "Hit Man." Associated Press

ence to buy into the idea that the characters in this film believe that Powell's face is bland and forgettable. This has everything to do with his character, Gary Johnson, a philosophy professor in New Orleans who lives a quiet, solitary life in the suburbs tending to his two cats, birding, tinkering with electronics and helping the local police install surveillance equipment for

sting operations. He drives a Honda Civic and wears ill-fitting polo shirts, knee-length jean shorts and socks with his semi-orthopedic sandals. And, of course, like many hot guys in disguise before him, he's got a pair of wire-rimmed glasses. Why he dresses like your middle-aged uncle in 1992 is anyone's guess. Were he in Bushwick, it might not even look odd. But this is a

movie and we know that Gary is predestined for a glow-up. Not that "Hit Man" allows itself to have any fun with the makeover aspect. No, once plain Gary is thrown into this amateur undercover work (by Retta and Sanjay Rao), we only get to see the final looks he wears to meet all the people looking to hire a hit man. He dips into the theatrical

for these occasions, sporting wigs, makeup, accents and fake tattoos in his attempt to be what he thinks each specific person thinks a hit man should be, which is moderately amusing. But besides a brief bit showing him watching a wig-and-makeup YouTube tutorial, his transformations are not exactly investigated. There's no shopping montage, no Harvey Fierstein-type character helping him find his way around the college theater department's costume room, and no apparent budgetary concerns or discussions, which seems odd for a guy who is only doing this undercover stuff for an extra paycheck. In a movie that perhaps had a better engine behind it, questions like these might evaporate with the laughter and enjoyment of a fairly silly premise. "Hit Man" does not quite have that, though. Again, that suspension of disbelief is necessary. Things do pick up with the introduction of The Girl, Madison (Adria Arjona, terrific despite being awfully underdeveloped), an unhappy wife looking to get rid of her cruel husband. □

Lenny Kravitz leans on the funk with glorious 'Blue Electric Light'

By MARK KENNEDY
AP Entertainment Writer

The bass is banging, the guitars are shrieking and Lenny Kravitz is howling on "Blue Electric Light," the rocker's best stuff in years, offering a welcome blast of funk in 2024.

There's joy and swagger in almost every track, with Kravitz showing his knack for adding cool stuff to songs a blistering guitar part here, a sax solo there or a touch of Wurlitzer. Bongos? Sure.

A talk box? Whatever, baby.

It all kicks off with a lush, arena-ready trademark Kravitz rocker in "It's Just Another Fine Day (In This Universe of Love)" and then he channels the late Prince in the addictive "TK421," which sounds like it could have been on "Purple Rain."

What is "TK421"? It's in the movie "Boogie Nights" as a term for a stereo upgrade and in "Star Wars"



This cover image released by Roxie Records shows "Blue Electric Light" by Lenny Kravitz. Associated Press

as the designation for a Stormtrooper. In Kravitz' NSFW video for the song, he strongly implies TK421 is his, ahem, personal stormtrooper. Whatever it is, you'll have a hard time finding a more pleasing song this summer.

"Honey" is a sweet seduction ballad and "Paralyzed" sees Kravitz thrillingly go full '80s heavy metal, while "Let It Ride" is more late Prince, with Kravitz pulling out a Moog and some Rollands for a synth-laden fest, making his voice almost menacing in the computer blue.

"Bundle of Joy" sounds initially like it must be about a baby, but Kravitz is back in the bedroom, admiring a lover's "savoir-faire to her silky thighs" before letting loose a very Purple One-like scream. He quivers

with passion in the soulful "Stuck in the Middle" and "Human" has terrific percussions and a Depeche Mode vibe.

He gets some scolding in on our social divisions on "Love Is My Religion," a foot-stomper with hot piano and the lyrics: "Warring and shaking our planet is baking in front of your nose/And the conclusion's coming fast so stay on your toes." Kravitz channels Rick James for another funky plea for us to all get along in "Heaven." The album ends with the title track, which fittingly sounds like it should play over the end credits of a high-octane movie franchise with cool robots and slinky models.

"I just want to make love/Under blue electric light," he sings. We are putty in his hands. □

Steinhauser solos to first pro win in Stage 17, Pogacar extends Giro lead to nearly eight minutes

PASSO BROCON, Italy (AP)

— Georg Steinhauser soloed to his first professional victory in the brutal 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia, and overall leader Tadej Pogacar extended his already considerable advantage to nearly eight minutes.

Steinhauser was smiling over the final 400 meters, knowing he was riding to the biggest success of his career in his grand tour debut. The young German then shook his head in disbelief before sitting up and raising his arms above his head as he crossed the summit finish at Passo Brocon. "It's something unbelievable. Already on Stage 8, I noticed I have good legs. I thought maybe I have the legs to win a stage," Steinhauser said.

"Today when I rode to the sign-on, I thought to myself 'I have good legs, maybe I will win today,' and then I went from the beginning



Georg Steinhauser reacts as he wins the 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia from Selva di Val Gardena to Passo Brocon, Italy, Wednesday, May 22, 2024.

in the break. It was a little bit strange because we got caught by the peloton again but at one moment I decided I have to try again and I did and it worked out."

The 22-year-old Steinhauser

has a strong cycling pedigree. His father, Tobias, was also a professional cyclist, while his uncle, Jan Ullrich, won the Tour de France as well as the Spanish Vuelta. Pogacar had threatened to spoil the German's day

with a late attack but the Slovenian rider finished 1 minute, 24 seconds behind Steinhauser. Antonio Tiberi led a reduced gap of overall contenders over the line for third, 1:42 behind.

"I heard on the radio and

Associated Press

I was super nervous on the last climb," Steinhauser said with a laugh. "I knew I had to push all the way to the finish. I heard at one point that he's attacking but I was already two (kilometers) to go so I thought I will make it."

Pogacar, a two-time Tour de France champion, still extended his lead to 7:42 over Daniel Martinez and 8:04 over Geraint Thomas.

"I'm satisfied how it is, even if I don't win anything else now, everything is just bonus from now on," Pogacar said. "The main goal is always to keep the jersey into Rome, not to do anything stupid."

"But there is one really nice stage, Monte Grappa close to Slovenia. We can see what can happen there."

There was none of the drama and chaos of the previous day but the weather was still wet and freezing in parts on a tough day in the Dolomites. □

Carlos Correa homers, makes diving grab to lead Twins over Nationals 3-2

By IAN NICHOLAS QUILLEN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Carlos Correa hit a solo home run and made a diving play to prevent a game-tying run, and the Minnesota Twins beat the Washington Nationals 3-2 on Wednesday.

"He makes the play of the day defensively, clearly," Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said of Correa's lunging stop and throw that preserved a 2-1 lead. "We're probably still playing, or we could be down if he doesn't play the way that he played today defensively. I mean, that's big-time stuff."

Max Kepler also had a solo shot, doubled and scored a late run to win the game and series, which the Twins began by losing their seventh in a row.

Minnesota starter Simeon Woods allowed three hits

and a walk over 4 and 2/3 scoreless innings, and Steven Okert (1-0) retired four straight batters after hopping on the Nationals' bullpen cart and tipping his driver a \$5 bill for the first win of his career with the Twins.

"I've been carrying it the

whole series, waiting to get in," Okert said.

Joey Meneses homered for Washington, which lost its seventh out of eight while going 0 for 8 with runners in scoring position.

In the seventh, Keibert Ruiz grounded into a fielder's choice off Jax Griffin to

plate one runner, advance another to third and cut Washington's deficit.

Jacob Young followed by hammering a grounder up the middle. But Correa ranged to his left, dove to glove the ball, then leaped to his feet and threw to retire Young by a step.

Caleb Thielbar worked a clean eighth, and after Kepler scored on Ryan Jeffers' single, Jhoan Duran worked around Meneses' homer to preserve his fourth save.

Jake Irvin (2-5) allowed two runs in 6 1/3 innings in his first career start against a Twins team that once drafted him in the late rounds out of high school.

"Jake pitched really well. He kept us in the game," said Nationals manager Dave Martinez.

The Nationals rightly allowed only five hits and struck out six, but twice succumbed to first-pitch swings.

Kepler led off the second by catching up to Irvin's fastball and sent a towering shot to right-center. With two outs in the sixth, Correa turned on Irvin's curveball and drove it several rows deep into the left-field seats.

"He went up there with a good plan," said Baldelli, who on Monday had vented that his team was not adjusting well to opponents focusing on off-speed offerings. "That's making an adjustment in a game. That's all the stuff we're talking about."

TRAINERS ROOM

Twins: DH/OF Trevor Larnach (turf toe) played his first game in the field since May 8, starting in left, but is still dealing with some soreness. "There's really only one way to test it out, it's to put him in the field and let him play," Baldelli said. □



Washington Nationals' Jesse Winker (6) is out at second against Minnesota Twins shortstop Carlos Correa (4) on a grounder by Luis Garcia Jr. who was safe at first during the fourth inning of a baseball game, Wednesday, May 22, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

Celtics and Pacers will try to overcome bad habits heading to Game 2 of East finals

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — There was a dominant refrain ringing in Jayson Tatum's head following the Celtics' comeback 133-128 overtime win over the Pacers to open the Eastern Conference finals.

"Don't relax," he said.

In each of the previous two rounds, Boston opened its series with Miami and Cleveland with lopsided victories, only to then lose Game 2.

The Pacers have experienced the opposite, dropping Game 1 in Rounds 1 and 2 and then having to regroup to overtake Milwaukee and New York.

Tyrese Haliburton's take-



Indiana Pacers center Myles Turner (33) drives against Boston Celtics guard Jaylen Brown (7) during the third quarter of Game 1 of the NBA Eastern Conference basketball finals, Tuesday, May 21, 2024, in Boston.

Associated Press

away from Indiana's latest Game 1 setback against the East's top seed? Be disappointed. But don't fret.

"We know we can play with these guys," Haliburton said. "There's a lot of people out there saying we don't belong here. We don't really care. We know we belong."

What's clear is that how both teams adjust for Game 2 on Thursday night will set the tone for the balance of this series.

Recent history aside, the similarities between the Celtics and Pacers were on display throughout Game 1.

Both teams thrived offensively this season and did so again, combining for 261 points Tuesday night. It was the highest scoring game of this postseason and the most in a conference finals game since Boston and Detroit totaled 264 in Game 4 of the 1987 East finals.

What was also on display were both teams' vulnerabilities. Indiana exploited Boston's weakened interior defense throughout, racking up 56 points in the paint. But the Celtics ultimately prevailed, benefiting from a myriad of mistakes by a young Pacers team short on playoff experience.

Haliburton had two key turnovers to help the Celtics rebound from a five-point deficit in the final two minutes of regulation. First, he dribbled off his foot as he was bringing the ball up the floor with less than 30 seconds remaining in a three-point game. He also fumbled the ball out of bounds with just over a minute to play in OT. The two miscues were part of 22 turnovers on the night for a Pacers team that came in averaging fewer than 12 per game in these playoffs. It's part of the growing pains Indiana coach Rick Carlisle expected his youth-heavy team would have to endure during this playoff run. "You have to go through it to really experience what it's all about," Carlisle said. □



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